

## **SUNK LAKE**

### **CLASS II NATURAL SCIENTIFIC STATE NATURAL AREA**

<b>COUNTY:</b>	Lauderdale	<b>ACREAGE:</b>	1,870
<b>7.5° QUADRANGLE:</b>	Fort Pillow	<b>OWNERSHIP:</b>	State of Tennessee
<b>PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROVINCE:</b>	Mississippi Alluvial Floodplain	<b>YEAR DESIGNATED:</b>	1986

#### **DESCRIPTION:**

Sunk Lake is a 1,870 acre natural area located in Lauderdale County about 18.5 miles northwest of Covington. It is located in the Mississippi Alluvial Floodplain and included in the Eastern Gulf Coastal Region of the southeastern United States. Sunk Lake supports excellent examples of bald cypress swamp, bottomland hardwood forest, and open marshy aquatic habitat. The diversity of wetland and upland communities offer a wide range of habitat for waterfowl and other birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, and both native terrestrial and aquatic vegetation. Rare plant species at Sunk Lake include creeping spot-flower (*Acmella oppositifolia*), featherfoil (*Hottonia inflata*), lake cress (*Neobeckia aquatica*), ovate-leaved arrowhead (*Sagittaria platyphylla*) and cedar elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*).

The forests at Sunk Lake surround a series of six shallow depressional lakes within the floodplain of the Mississippi River. The Five Hundred Pound Lake derives its name from a local fisherman's account of having caught 500 pounds of buffalo fish there in one day. The lakes within the preserve were created by the same series of the New Madrid earthquake that created Reelfoot Lake. The floodwaters from the Mississippi River recharge the lakes approximately every five years. Recent additions to the natural area include farmland that is being planted with cherry oak, Nuttall oak, willow oak and other bottomland species to restore the bottomland hardwood forest. This was once the dominant ecosystem of the Mississippi Alluvial Floodplain. The forest restoration will help reduce lake siltation, one of the most significant regional problems effecting water quality.

Sunk Lake is cooperatively managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Tennessee Natural Areas Program. It is classified by the USFWS as a Public Use Natural Area and a Wildlife Refuge Area. A 180- foot boardwalk provides an observation viewing area of the lake. A boat ramp provides lake access for fishing boats and canoes. Fishing is permitted. Gasoline powered boats are prohibited.

#### **SITE MANAGEMENT:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lower Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge, 234 Fort Prudhomme Dr., Henning, TN 38041, phone (901) 738-2296; Division of Natural Heritage, 401 Church St., 14th Floor L&C Tower, Nashville, TN 37243, phone (615) 532-0431.

#### **PUBLIC ACCESS:**

Sunk Lake is open to the public from March 16 – November 14. Parking, a boat ramp, and a boardwalk are provided; no hiking trails are provided at this time.

#### **DIRECTIONS:**

From Covington, take U.S. Hwy. 51 north to Henning and turn west on Hwy. 87 to Sunk Lake Rd. Turn right on Sunk Lake Rd. at the Three Points Community and travel for 2.9 miles to a gravel road to the right; follow the graveled road to the parking area.